



In Touch South India

Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai



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<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

International Education Week

Indian students seem to instinctively understand the value of international educational opportunities – more Indian students (today numbering over 83,000) attend U.S. colleges and universities than students from any other country. (The lesser known story is that American students are increasingly coming to India to study, with almost 20% more this year than last.) So when the Consulate General, along with the U.S. Educational Foundation in India (USEFI), celebrated International Education Week from November 13-16, 2007, our programs met with an enthusiastic response.

The theme for the eighth annual celebration was: “International Education: Fostering Global Citizenship and Respect.” This is in recognition that all of us, whatever our nationality might be, must be prepared to work in a global economic environment. To be truly educated, you must have an understanding of the wider world, be comfortable with people from other countries and cultures, and, ideally, speak more than one language. In other words, we should all strive to be global citizens while respecting national differences. That, in a sense, is what international education is all about.

The Consulate General and USEFI kicked off International Education Week with an inaugural event on November 13 highlighting the proliferation of educational linkages between Indian universities and their U.S. counterparts and the expanding opportunities for Indian students in the United States. Professor D. Viswanathan, Vice Chancellor of Anna University, expressed his admiration for the U.S. educational system and detailed the success he has had in promoting educational exchanges, i.e., Anna University students and professors going to the U.S. and American students and professors coming to study and work at Anna University in Chennai.



Adam Berry, Admissions Counselor of Lawrence Technological University, Michigan, chats with interested students at a university fair held in Chennai

Throughout the week, there were programs at local institutions of higher learning, like MOP Vaishnav College for Women and Ethiraj College for Women, informing students about the admissions process for U.S. colleges and universities and application procedures for student visas. The week was capped off with an inter-school

debate competition on the “Relevance of International Education in a Shrinking World” with 26 schools participating. When we asked the students how many of them wanted to pursue future studies in the United States, virtually every hand shot up. Indian students evidently are taking global citizenship to heart.

Get In Touch

Consulate main web link:

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

Other links:

<http://americanlibrary.in.library.net>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

<http://www.usaep.org>

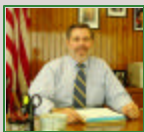
<http://buyusa.gov/india>

Consulate Phone Number:

044-2857-4000

Consulate Fax Number:

044-2811-2020



During my 32+ years as an American diplomat, including service at nine overseas posts, I have had many firsthand chances to see the value of international education and educational exchange. I think there is no greater influence on international understanding -- and through it peace and progress -- than that which comes from opportunities for people from different countries and cultures to meet and spend time with each other. While visits are good and work opportunities are even better, no overseas experience is more powerful or more meaningful than education.

My own daughter, Ann, attended schools in Sweden, Poland and China. When she returned to the U.S. to begin university studies, she complained to my wife and me about how little her American classmates seemed to know or to care about the outside world. Ann is doing her part to change that, through the languages she speaks, the exotic foods she prepares, and by bringing friends to visit us overseas. Only a few weeks ago we visited Ann in the U.S. where she is now a post-graduate student at Harvard University. She invited a group of her friends to meet us, friends from Canada, Australia, Colombia, Israel and India. Ann has become a citizen of the world, and she is the first to say that she is the better for it. I hope that more and more students -- Indian, American and others -- will have the opportunity for international education.

-David T. Hopper, Consul General

American Corner – Bangalore Celebrates Third Anniversary

The American Corner – Bangalore, the result of a partnership between the U.S. Consulate General – Chennai and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, celebrated its third anniversary from November 9-11. The celebration featured presentations by American diplomats and others on such disparate topics as student visas, Muslim life in America, the U.S. legal system, admission to U.S. universities and colleges, and the benefits of free trade. Mr. N. Ramanuja and Mr. S.N. Suresh, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Chairman and Director, respectively, participated in the programs.

The mission of the American Corner – Bangalore is to foster mutual understanding between the American people and the

people of Karnataka. The Corner houses collections of books, magazines, music and on- and off-line databases from and about the United States. The Corner is open to the public, and it is located in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan at Race Course Road. The hours of operation are 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Mon.–

Fri.; 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday. Call Mr. Muralidhar at 080-22355426 for more information.



Vice Consul Lubna Khan spoke on Muslim life in America

American Library Focuses on Climate Change

On November 16, the American Library – Chennai hosted a roundtable on climate science and climate change impacts with some 40 local scientists, activists, students and members of the press. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Venkatachalam Ramaswamy, a visiting professor from Princeton University's NOAA/Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory and focused on some of his research inter-



Dr. Ramaswamy, with Information Officer Wesley Robertson, addressing the participants

ests, such as climate changes due to natural and human-induced causes, e.g., volcanic eruptions and carbon dioxide; chemicals in the atmosphere, pollution and effects on climate; analyses of climate using satellite observations; and projections of regional climate change in the 21st Century.

Several of the participants pointed out the need to increase awareness of the issues in the general public and to heighten interaction between the scientific community and policy-makers. Dr. Ramaswamy pointed out: "The only way to get good policy is to provide good science."

Positive Images



▲ Consulate General children, along with two moms, dress up and trick or treat on Halloween,



▲ Writer/theater artist Ms. Jennifer Schaupp teaching communication and theater skills to students of Madrasa – I – Azam.



▲ Center three from left are Ms. Kanimozhi, Member of Parliament Rajya Sabha, Ms. Fathima Muzaffer, State Organizer, Women's Wing, Indian Union Muslim League, and Ms. Susan Hopper at an Eid Ul-Fitr celebration



▲ Famous jazz group, Steve Smith and Vital Information, enthralls the crowd at Sivagami Pethachi Auditorium, Chennai

Fighting Violence Against Women

The Consulate General – Chennai issues more visas to dependents of foreign students and temporary workers in the U.S. than any other diplomatic post in the world -- some 40,000 such



Dr. Poongothai, Tamil Nadu Minister for Social Welfare, hands an information leaflet to a visa applicant while Consul General David T. Hopper looks on

visas a year. Occasionally, some of these dependents, almost always women, later become victims of domestic abuse or even violence committed by strangers. Because of language and other barriers, victims are sometimes isolated and don't know where to turn for help.

A young visa officer had an idea about how to help these women. She conceived and, with help from her colleagues, later created a small leaflet with information on how a victim of domestic abuse could get help in the U.S. by making a simple phone call. The leaflet (in English, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam) will henceforth be handed to each recipient of a dependent visa.

On November 26, the day after the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Consul General David Hopper presented the first copy of the leaflet to Dr. Poongothai, Tamil Nadu Minister for Social Welfare. Mr. Hopper said on that occasion: "Help for victims of domestic abuse and violence is available in every part of the U.S. We want to make absolutely sure that everyone who receives a visa knows that. These victims need not, and indeed must not, suffer in silence." He added: "This may be a small step, but we hope that by making this information available, we will make the visa line one of the front lines in the fight against violence against women."

Dr. Poongothai, a physician, said of the Consulate's initiative: "The pamphlet is like a vaccine. I hope women will not need it, but life is not always the way we want. I urge every woman to keep the pamphlet with her passport just in case, and to help ensure that she has a prosperous, happy and peaceful life."

Consular Corner:

American Citizen Services

Providing vital federal services to the thousands of U.S. citizens living, working and vacationing in South India presents a unique challenge to the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit of the Consulate General. For individuals who need to visit the Consulate General for routine or emergency assistance, however, the challenge can be even greater.

Thanks to India's unique migration cycle with the U.S., the majority of American citizens in India are children. United States law requires that passport applications for children be submitted in person by both parents, so for every such application, the entire family must travel to Chennai, resulting in school and work days lost, expensive travel and accommodations, and inconvenience to the family. With thousands of American citizen children living in South India, generating 2,500 passport applications per year, that's a lot of otherwise avoidable travel and expense.

In an effort to alleviate some of the difficulty of applying for passports, the ACS Unit recently began conducting occasional visits to Bangalore and Hyderabad. During these visits, Americans who would otherwise be required to travel to the Consulate in Chennai are offered the opportunity to conduct their business with a consular officer close to home. While the outreach service can accommodate virtually any of our routine services, it is designed specifically for those services which can only be performed in person: child passport applications and notary services.

While the ACS Unit schedules as many appointments as possible during our brief trips, the outreach program is unlikely to ever completely satisfy the need for services in Hyderabad and Bangalore. Most passport applications and notary requests will still have to be done in Chennai.

Due to security concerns and the desire to avoid lines of visa aspirants at the outreach sites, the sessions are not widely advertised. The ACS Unit will send an e-mail with details of the event approximately two weeks beforehand. Thus, your best chance to get an appointment early is to register with the Consulate online at <http://travelregistration.state.gov>.

What We Read

Kelly Kopcial
Vice Consul

Object of Virtue

by Nicholas B.A. Nicholson



From the exclusive auction houses of New York to the Bolshoi in Moscow, we follow the trail of an unknown Fabergé figurine in this story that is part art primer and part detective story. Sasha Ozerovsky, an expert on Russian art at a small auction house, is presented with an object that will make his career. The problem is that it may be a very clever fake. He must use his research talents and his family connections in Russia to track down the truth. The author's knowledge of Russian art and history make for an entertaining and educational read.

Kris Fresonke
Vice Consul

A House for Mr. Biswas

by V.S. Naipaul



Naipaul's first big novel, and a masterpiece, is as sharp and vital as at its initial publication in 1961. Mr. Biswas of Trinidad, restless and thwarted, spends his life looking for the status and self-assurance that only a proper house will bring him. He gets his house and thus becomes a nearly-epic hero in the dusty back streets of Port of Spain, closing the door on his former dwelling, and scrapping a rather tedious, standard-issue post-colonial identity for West Indians in the 1950s. Biswas is not a political symbol; he is just a man who finds what he was looking for.

Profile of an American

When the young American woman, Edith Virginia Greet, arrived in Madras in 1947, she had no idea how long she would remain in India. She took the train to Cochin and eventually founded an orphanage and a school. Sixty years later, she is still there.



Ms. Greet is known to generations of students in Kochi as Auntie Greet. We phoned her shortly after she had celebrated her 87th birthday.

What brought you to India?

During the war I worked in the State Department, the Maritime Commission, in Washington. After the war ended, God called me to work with children, especially girls. I went to India with a friend who had been here before.

What was the voyage like?

We traveled in an old troop ship with 500 Chinese passengers. Along the way, in places like Hong Kong, we saw the terrible wreckage of the war, the hulls of partially submerged ships. By the time we arrived in Cochin, I had only \$12.

How did you get by in a foreign land?

At first it was difficult. In the year of Independence, anti-British sentiment was strong, and some people did not distinguish between British and American. But I found work to do teaching in a nearby fishing village. My friend, who stayed with me the first three and a half years, also helped.

How did you come to found a school and orphanage?

When missionaries in another mission closed up an orphanage, eight girls were left without a place to live. I had to do something. Later I started a kindergarten and day school which grew to become Greet's Public School and Junior College with more than 1,000 students.

Don't you miss America?

I go back to visit every 5 to 7 years. I went two years ago for treatment of a stomach ailment. But my work is here. I'm not ready to retire.

And so Auntie Greet continues to care for and educate generation after generation of children in Kochi, not for money or acclaim, but because that was what she was called to do 60 years ago.

(Photo credit: www.manningtreeimages.com)



Auntie Greet today with friend Lassie

A Priceless Cultural Heritage

One year ago, Ambassador David C. Mulford presented a check for \$35,000 to Rev. Dr. O.V. Jathanna, Principal of the United Theological College in Bangalore. The money was provided by the 2006 Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation and used to microfilm and digitize ancient documents, including palm-leaf manuscripts, held in the College library. On October 29, 2007, Consul for Public Affairs Frederick Kaplan and Information Resource Officer Steven Kerchoff joined Dr. Jathanna to celebrate the completion of the project.



Dr. Jathanna and Mr. Kaplan examine a restored manuscript

In a ceremony attended by hundreds of students, professors and library users, Dr. Jathanna noted that the library's rare books and manuscripts had become virtually inaccessible to scholars because of the fear that old and brittle paper and fragile palm leaves would be damaged or destroyed when handled. Microfilming

and digitization mean that researchers and students now have easy access to a treasure trove of ethnographic and historical information, including folk literature, religious writings, and texts on astrology, astronomy, medicine, and veterinary and agricultural sciences.

Mr. Kerchoff commented that librarians are often torn between providing access to rare documents and preserving them. This project allows United Theological College librarians to do both.

Mr. Kaplan, formally inaugurating the newly digitized and microfilmed collection, said: "This is not the cultural heritage only of India, but of humankind. If these works were to disappear, be destroyed or be forgotten, all the world would be poorer. We would know less about where we came from as humans and who we are today. The knowledge we will gain through preserving these texts is therefore priceless."

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